Flatline - 'Look after her, Pol'

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by reid_simp

Summary

Tommy is back in time to say goodbye to Ruby

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Tommy has one hand on Ruby's, the other in Lizzie's on the other side of the hospital bed. He'd gotten back from the mountains in time, and the doctors say the gold isn't working. They say it's too late, that all they can do now is be with her.

Tommy isn't processing information. He can't breathe. He hasn't moved since Ruby fell asleep two hours ago. She's starting to wake up again now, pain across her sweaty face from the fever. She's struggling to breathe, seeing things that aren't there and shivering despite how hot she is.

He can't breathe. She's fading. His own daughter is fading, and he can't put two thoughts together beyond the fact his daughter is fading from him. These last moments he spends holding himself together for her and Lizzie. He spends each moment memorising every part of her, memorising how her hand feels in his except how hot she is. Every smile line, every freckle.

He just wants to see her eyes again. Just wants to smile and tell her it's okay to let go.

It's not. It's not okay to let go. It's not okay that he's forced to survive and endure while she has to leave. It's not fair; none of this is fair, and for the first time in years, he asks why.

Same answer as it always has been. Because. There's no God to orchestrate this mess. Could have been Polly, but she would never do this to a child. She hated him in the end, but she loved Ruby, loved her like a grandchild.

Lizzie squeezes his hand to bring him back to the moment. Ruby's eyes are flickering, then opening slightly. "Mum?" she looks vaguely up at her, then at him. It breaks his heart to see the pain in his eyes. "Dad?" She pauses. "You're here?"

"I'm sorry I left, Ruby. I'm here now. I'm here with you. I'm not leaving again." If it meant Tommy ripped out his own lungs rights now to give them to her and save her life, he would do it in a heartbeat. He'd do anything. More importantly, he'd do anything to end her suffering. It hurts him so much to see her like this. He can't stand it. He can barely stay here, watching her in pain. It causes him great suffering to endure this, but he does because he swore to Lizzie and himself that he wouldn't leave again. Ada had managed to knock some sense into him.

"I'm.... tired..." Ruby trails off, and, for the first time since he discovered Polly's body in front of the house, Tommy's eyes water. He blinks them away. Ruby can't see this. It will do her no good to see him like this.

"I know, sweetheart," Lizzie starts. She's crying. Tommy needs to hold it together long enough to see... to see her off to be with Polly. Then he can break down. There simply isn't time right now to fall apart. She looks up at Tommy briefly, and the moment shares between them where they suddenly are all too aware of reality, all too aware of the end of their lives as they know it. Tommy nods, silently allowing her to say what he knows she wants to. Well, doesn't want to, has to. Has to so Ruby knows it's okay.

“You can let go, Ruby.” She holds back a sob. “It’s okay to go.” Ruby looks up at him. Tommy can’t talk; can’t let them words come out because then it will be real, but he nods, squeezes her hand and assures her he agrees. He doesn’t agree. How could he possibly agree?

“’Love you...” she whispers, eyes falling closed before Tommy can have a final chance to see them.

“I love you, Ruby,” Tommy forces out because, as much as it hurts, he knows it has to happen. Lizzie does the same. He leans forward, leaving a kiss on her forehead. Fuck TB. He'll spend the rest of his life in pain as long as he can have that last kiss.

“Polly?” He can hear the faint whisper and he only allows his face to betray his emotions because he knows she can’t see him.

Tommy can tell she's gone because her hand goes cold fast. There's a hand on his shoulder. “Look after her,” he calls to the hand on him. “Look after her, Pol.”

End Notes

very very late. crazy tired and quite burnt out, so sorry if it's not very good but it is my absolute goal to catch up by the end of the month!

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